

Alfred, Asser and Boethius

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Note: Subsequent study of the Brittonic gloss identified on pp. 8-9 suggested that it was more probably Cornish or Breton than Welsh: see P. Sims-Williams, 'A New Brittonic Gloss on Boethius: *ud rocashaas*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 50, (2005), pp. 77-86. It would follow that the early insular glossing was probably the work of Cornish readers rather than Welsh.

Abbreviations

ASE *Anglo-Saxon England*

CCSL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*

CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*

EETS *Early English Text Society*

JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*

OMT *Oxford Medieval Texts*

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Although King Alfred's preface acknowledges the help of various learned advisers in his translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*,¹ the preface to his version of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* gives no hint that anyone had assisted him with that text. William of Malmesbury, however, reported that the meaning of the text had been explained to the king by his Welsh adviser Asser.² In recent years that possibility has been particularly associated with the tantalising evidence of Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 3363, and it is that manuscript which I wish to discuss in this article, in recognition of Michael Lapidge's important work on both Welsh and Anglo-Saxon scholarship in Latin.

Vatican 3363, a copy of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* written in the early ninth century with glosses in numerous hands from the ninth century onwards, is a manuscript of potentially great significance for our understanding of insular culture.³ The multitude of glosses in a hand that has been identified as Welsh and dating from the late ninth century testifies to interest in Boethius in an insular context at an important moment. The more sporadic glosses of the early tenth century, attributed in part to St Dunstan, take the story of insular interest in Boethius further. The close links between the glosses and later Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of Boethius suggest that the manuscript played a key role in the development of a specifically English revision of the Remigian commentary on Boethius. And the possibility that the glosses are closely related in some way to King Alfred's version of Boethius lends them particular significance. The manuscript has been discussed sporadically for nearly a century, but I would like here to attempt to draw together what is now known about it and try to place it in the tradition of Boethian commentary.⁴

From the time of Alcuin, who is generally credited with rediscovering the work, interest in the *Consolatio* seems to have developed rapidly in Western Europe. There are

¹ *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. H. Sweet, EETS os 45 and 50 (London, 1871), 7.

² *William of Malmesbury: Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, OMT, 2 vols. (Oxford 1998-9), II.122 .

³ I use the single term 'glosses' to cover the whole range of interlinear and marginal annotation, from single-word equivalents above the line of text through slightly longer explications above the line or in the margins to more extensive elaborations in the margin, since any attempt to distinguish between 'glosses' and 'comments' only causes confusion.

⁴ I would though emphasise that this is very much work in progress, as part of the Alfredian Boethius project (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board of England and Wales) which will produce a new edition of the Old English versions of Boethius. This account draws heavily on the research which Dr Rohini Jayatilaka has done for the project, beginning in 2002, and in particular on her invaluable work in transcribing and collating commentaries on the *Consolatio*. It could not have been attempted without her meticulous scholarship.

altogether about sixty manuscripts dating from the ninth to the eleventh century.⁵ Most of these contain some commentary material, ranging from a sprinkling of marginal notes in early manuscripts to a packed mass of interlinear glosses and marginal commentary in manuscripts of the eleventh century. There are also a handful of manuscripts from the period containing continuous commentary, without the text of the *Consolatio* itself, though they appear to derive from glossed copies. The glosses vary greatly from one manuscript to another, and in many cases have clearly been added in successive stages by different hands, in ways which would suggest a variety of sources and commentators. Even so, from the early twentieth century scholarship has tended to attribute most of the surviving sets of glosses to two main traditions: a commentary ascribed to Remigius of Auxerre and said to have been composed or compiled in the first decade of the tenth century; and a commentary associated with the monastery of St Gall, traditionally said to have been produced in the ninth century.

The interest of the Vatican manuscript for studies of Boethian commentary was emphasised in 1939 by Pierre Courcelle.⁶ He argued that the glosses in it represented a third early commentary, distinct from both that attributed to Remigius and that which he attributed to ‘the anonymous of St Gall’. It was he suggested, certainly earlier than the work of Remigius and possibly the earliest extant commentary on the *Consolatio*.

Further study of the manuscript was perhaps discouraged by Courcelle’s statement that much of the commentary was illegible, but in 1973 Fabio Troncarelli reported that a great deal of it could in fact be read without difficulty, though for some passages ultra-violet light was needed.⁷ He challenged Courcelle’s view that the commentary was independent of that attributed to Remigius and adduced a large number of parallels between the Vatican glosses and the Remigian commentary as witnessed by Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 15090. He concluded that the so-called Remigian commentary had to be dated much earlier than Remigius, and this, as he put it, ‘changed the whole perspective on the ninth century’.⁸

It had long been recognised that the glosses in the Vatican manuscript were mainly in insular script, though Courcelle himself seems not to have discussed this aspect and earlier writers associated the insular features with Irish scholars on the Continent.⁹ In an article

⁵ The invaluable *Codices Boethiani* series, initiated by Margaret Gibson and Lesley Smith and published by the Warburg Institute, is steadily working through descriptions of the manuscripts of Boethius’s works; the volumes for Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland (Vol. I), Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland (Vol. II) and Italy and the Vatican City (Vol. III) have so far been published.

⁶ P. Courcelle, ‘Étude critique sur les commentaires de la Consolation de Boèce (IXe–XVe) siècles’, *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 14 (1939), 5-140. He repeated these views without significant change in his later book, *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris, 1967).

⁷ Fabio Troncarelli, ‘Per una ricerca sui commenti altomedievali al *De Consolatione* di Boezio’, in *Miscellanea in Memoria di Giorgio Cencetti* (Turin, 1973), 363-80.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 372.

⁹ Cf *Anicii Manlii Seuerini Boethii: Philosophiae consolationis libri quinque*, ed. Wilhelm Weinberger, CSEL 67 (Vienna, 1934), xii and n. 6 and xxii.

published in 1977 Diane Bolton reported Troncarelli's views, communicated to her, that 'some at least of the glosses were probably written at the end of the [ninth] century in Wales or Cornwall and might well be the work of the Welsh Asser and his monks'.¹⁰ In 1981 two separate studies, by Fabio Troncarelli and Malcolm Parkes, identified Welsh and English hands at work in the manuscript. Troncarelli published a substantial account of the manuscript and its history, together with a transcription of the glosses.¹¹ He distinguished several different stages or layers of glossing in the manuscript: (1) some glosses in a continental hand contemporary with the text, or 'at least from the first half of the ninth century';¹² (2) a large number of glosses in an insular script with distinctively Welsh characteristics, which he dated to the late ninth or early tenth century; and (3) and (4) further glosses, mainly on the first few leaves, in a hybrid insular-caroline script, which he attributed to St Dunstan and a contemporary, both working at Glastonbury. He attributed the second hand to a Welsh scribe working at Glastonbury, and recorded the agreement of Neil Ker and Julian Brown in the attribution of the third hand to Dunstan.¹³ He repeated in more tentative form his earlier arguments about the relationship with the Remigian commentary, noting that the two agreed 'in their essential lines' and that there are occasional comments in an early Carolingian hand which agreed with the Remigian glosses.¹⁴ And he concluded by identifying the Vatican commentary as an abridgement of, or selection from, an otherwise lost commentary prepared by Asser for the use of King Alfred: 'the Vatican commentary records glosses derived from the commentary of Asser'.¹⁵

In a brief note on the Vatican manuscript commissioned for a volume on Boethius and published in the same year, Malcolm Parkes gave a similar account of the hands.¹⁶ He suggested that the main body of glosses were written in the British Isles, in 'a late ninth-century insular hand originating from Wales, South-West England, or Cornwall' but noted that 'differences between colour of ink and forms and habits of punctuation in different glosses, and the way in which some of the glosses were laid out in the margins, suggest that

¹⁰ Diane K. Bolton, 'The Study of the Consolation of Philosophy in Anglo-Saxon England', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 44 (1977), 33-78, at 36.

¹¹ Fabio Troncarelli, *Tradizioni perdute. La 'Consolatio Philosophiae' nell' alto medioevo* (Padua, 1981), 137-96.

¹² *Ibid.*, 145.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 141-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 144-6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁶ M. B. Parkes, 'A Note on MS Vatican, Bibl. Apost., lat. 3363', in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford, 1981), 425-7 [rept. in his *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London, 1991), 259-62]. I am very grateful to Professor Parkes for his generous help with further discussion of the manuscript, though I would not wish to implicate him in my own conclusions.

they [the glosses] were added by the same hand at different times, and perhaps compiled from different sources'. He also reported that the tenth-century glosses were partly in the hand of St Dunstan.

Troncarelli's account of the manuscript and his detailed and painstaking recording of the commentary leaves us all in his debt. But as he acknowledged, there remain many uncertainties and much work still to do. His transcript is nothing like as full as one would have wished. As he noted, he omitted most of the interlinear glosses, which are extremely numerous, and while he did excellent work with the almost illegible passages under UV light, he omitted some of the longer marginal comments. And not surprisingly, since this was not his main concern, his reporting of the reading of the glosses or their location in the manuscript is not as accurate as we need. What is more, despite his identification of the different hands in his description he did not distinguish their contributions within his transcription, and this has crucial significance for any discussion of the place of the Vatican glosses in the history of Boethian commentary.

Courcelle's reference to the manuscript as 'a commentary' perhaps implies more coherence than the situation merits. We have a small scattering of early glosses, a very large number of interlinear lexical equivalents in the Welsh hand, together with a few longer marginal comments in the same hand, and then some more comments in various tenth-century hands. Parkes' observation that the Welsh hand added his glosses at several different stages, and probably from several distinct sources, reinforces the conclusion that what we have in this manuscript is not really 'the earliest known commentary' on the *Consolatio* but a gradual accumulation of glosses built up over a century or more, and probably in more than one country.

This has significant implications for Troncarelli's 1973 argument about parallels between the Vatican glosses and comments that supposedly formed part of the commentary by Remigius. Of the first ten examples given by Troncarelli, eight seem to my eye to be the work of the tenth-century Glastonbury hands which he identified in his later study. Such parallels would indicate only that Dunstan and his colleagues had access to a version of the Remigian commentary towards the middle of the tenth century and used it to supplement the existing glosses in the Vatican manuscript, which would not be surprising and requires no redating of that commentary. Of the other two, one seems to be not a parallel at all, and the other is the one word 'oblivionem' glossing 'lethargus', which coincidence would allow. Any further consideration of the relationship between the Vatican glosses and Remigius clearly needs to take account of the dates of the glosses in question.

The text

The text is clearly and carefully written, with the metres copied in uncials and mostly in verse lines. Troncarelli took the view that the manuscript was written at Fleury at some point in the first thirty years of the ninth century.¹⁷ Parkes places its origin in the Loire valley, in the middle of the ninth century. Either way it is one of the earliest copies of the *Consolatio* that survives (and the earliest manuscript with an Anglo-Saxon provenance). The fact that the parchment is prepared in the insular fashion, with hair sides facing flesh sides, suggests that there may have been significant insular influence at the place from which it originated. The beginning of the manuscript has been erased, and the first two pages have been supplied in a

¹⁷ Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 139.

fifteenth-century hand. The original text now starts at Book 1 metre 2 line 14 (f. 2v).

The glosses

Glosses appear in numerous hands, perhaps as many as eight, up to the eleventh century, and still more, which I have not analysed, in later medieval hands. But, following Troncarelli, we can usefully distinguish three early sets.

1. Early Continental glosses.

Troncarelli drew attention to the early glosses in his 1981 study, and stated that they were in a hand coeval with the text or very soon after, perhaps of the text scribe himself.¹⁸ But he identified only one example¹⁹ and did not describe the features of the hand or his reasons for dating it, and seems not to have included any of these early glosses in his transcription of the commentary.

The one instance which Troncarelli specified is on f. 9r, commenting on the end of Book I metre 7.²⁰ The gloss reads:

Quattuor sunt proprietates quae accidunt propter cupiditatem [id est] gaudium timor spes dolor. Unde dicit uirgilius hinc metuunt cupiunt gaudent dolent.

It is in Caroline minuscule, with no traces of the insular forms which dominate the Welsh hand and are prominent in the Glastonbury hands. While it certainly resembles the text hand in some respects, the 'g' is distinctly different, showing no trace of the closed loop to the tail seen in the text. That the gloss pre-dated the work of the Welsh glossator is attested by the fact that alongside this gloss, out in the margin and almost certainly therefore written later, is another comment on the same lines, in the Welsh hand.

The same gloss appears verbatim in two later manuscripts of English origin, CUL Kk.3.21 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6401A, but since, as we shall see, there is reason to think they acquired the gloss along with many others from the Vatican manuscript itself the parallel tells us nothing about the earlier history of the gloss. Troncarelli pointed to a similar gloss in the extracts from the commentary attributed to Remigius printed by Stewart on the basis of the Trier and Maihingen manuscripts, and suggested that this was a revision and expansion of the Vatican gloss:

Quattuor animae notissimas passiones hic tangit, quarum duae ab opinatis bonis sunt, hoc est et gaudium et spes, et una de praesenti, altera est de futuro, gaudium de praesenti, spes de futuro. Duae etiam ab opinatis malis, quarum una est de praesenti et altera de futuro similiter, dolor sc. de praesenti, timor de futuro. Quae etiam Virgilius commemorat: Hinc cupiunt, metuunt, gaudentque dolentque. Nam spes et cupiditas idem. Dicit ergo quicumque his subiacent passionibus animum liberum et

¹⁸ Ibid. 145 and n. 37. The footnote cites Prof. Bernhard Bischoff as giving in a letter the middle of the ninth century as the latest possible date for these glosses, but Bischoff's own notes seem to date them as late in the century, and West Frankish. Bischoff's papers are preserved in Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Nachlaßreferat, Ana 553, and I am extremely grateful to Dr Birgit Ebersperger of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften for identifying the relevant comments for me and providing copies.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 146 n.38.

²⁰ The same single instance is cited in Bischoff's notes.

rationis plenum procul dubio se non habere demonstrant. Nam et Cicero dicit quia si iudex has tulerit passiones uerum fari non poterit.²¹

This is not very similar but there is indeed significant overlap, especially in the quotation from Virgil (*Aeneid* 6.733). This definition of the four passions of the soul, together with the quotation from the *Aeneid*, seems to have been something of an early medieval commonplace, found in Augustine and Jerome and Priscian among others.²² But Diane Bolton suggested as a source for the Remigian passage a comment found in the commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* attributed to Servius, and there is striking similarity of wording:

hinc metuunt cupiuntque dolent gaudentque ex corporis coniunctione et hebetudine. Varro et omnes philosophi dicunt quattuor esse passiones, duas a bonis opinatis et duas a malis opinatis rebus: nam dolere et timere duae opiniones malae sunt, una praesentis, alia futuri: item gaudere et cupere opiniones bonae sunt, una praesentis, altera futuri.²³

Strikingly similar too, and including a reference to Cicero, is the comment in Servius on the *Georgics*.²⁴

The Remigian gloss is evidently too similar to Servius to be simply an expansion of the Vatican gloss, which shows little trace of the wording of Servius. It is conceivable that the Vatican comment is the original, drawing on memories of Servius or Priscian, and that Remigius recognised the Virgil allusion and expanded it using Servius's words. But on the face of it, it seems more likely that the Vatican gloss is a simplification of the 'Remigius' comment, reducing it to its bare bones, in which case it would demonstrate that the comment was in existence before the date assigned to Remigius's work (though not necessarily outside the lifetime of Remigius if Bischoff's dating of the hand as late in the ninth century is correct). Either way, it is too much of a coincidence to suppose that both commentators independently invoked the same line of the *Aeneid* to comment on these lines of Boethius: and since there is no reason to think Remigius would have seen the Vatican manuscript itself, given its later history, it does seem to be the case that the early glosses in the manuscript were drawn from a body of commentary already in existence.

A similar hand, perhaps the same, is responsible for other comments here and there. The first that I have been able to identify provides a brief marginal comment on the Greek

²¹ H. F. Stewart, 'A Commentary by Remigius Autissiodorensis on the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius', *JTS* 17 (1916), 22-42, at 28. Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 146 n. 38.

²² Prisciani, *Institutionum grammaticarum libri XVIII*, ed. M. Hertz and H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini* 2 and 3 (Leipzig, 1855-9), III.270.25-27; Augustine, *De civitate dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47-48 (Turnhout, 1955), 14.3.22-31; Jerome, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem libri XIV*, ed. Fr. Glorie, CCSL 75 (Turnhout, 1964), 1.1.271-76.

²³ Diane K. Bolton, 'Remigian Commentaries on the 'Consolation of Philosophy' and their Sources', *Traditio* 33 (1977), 381-94, at 388 and n. 40; Servius Grammaticus, *Commentarius in Vergilii Aeneidos libros*, ed. G. Thilo and H. Hagen, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1881-4), II.103.

²⁴ Servius Grammaticus, *Commentarius in Vergilii Georgicon libros*, ed. G. Thilo (Leipzig, 1887), 267.

ovos λυρας at the beginning of 1 prose 4, on f. 4r of the manuscript:

expers lyrae i. non cognoscis modulationem meae lyrae. id est musicae art[is].

Although the gloss ‘expers lyrae’ does appear in other manuscripts containing Remigian commentary, the rest does not; it does appear though, rather disconcertingly, in a copy of the St Gall commentary, Einsiedeln 179, in identical words: ‘Expers lyrae. i. non cognoscis modulationem meae lyrae. i. musicae artis’.²⁵ On f. 5r of the Vatican manuscript a similar hand seems to be responsible for a long comment on ‘puduit’ in Book 1 prose 4.19:

pudere debuerat fortunam i. si non puduit fortunam hoc consentire propter meam innocentiam saltim uilitas accusantium qui dampnati fuerant pudere illam decuisset.

The same gloss, apart from the first three words, also appears not only in CUL Kk.2.31 as one might expect, but also in two other Remigian manuscripts with no connection to England.

On the evidence available so far, then, this manuscript had acquired at least a sprinkling of glosses on the Continent before it fell into the hands of the Welsh commentator. The parallels with Continental manuscripts drawing on the Remigian tradition and also on the St Gall tradition, which are unlikely to have drawn on Vatican 3363 itself, suggest that these early glosses did not originate with the Vatican manuscript, or at least were not confined to it, but testify to at least a small body of commentary that had already developed in the ninth century and was to feed into the commentary material that has been associated with Remigius and St Gall.

2. The Welsh hand

The main body of glosses, both interlinear and marginal and extending right through the manuscript, are in an insular script with a distinctively Welsh character and showing some Welsh abbreviations.²⁶ Troncarelli sees it as the work of one scribe whom he dates to the end of the ninth century or the beginning of the tenth. Parkes describes it, as noted above, as ‘a late ninth-century insular hand’, but has implied that there may be more than one hand at work;²⁷ the appearance certainly does vary considerably. One further piece of evidence, which has not been noticed before, confirms the Welsh associations of the manuscript. On f. 37r the word ‘perosa’ (‘greatly hated/hating’), in Book 4 m1.4, is glossed with the Welsh word ‘rocashaas’.²⁸ This is not in the hand of the main glossator (it uses caroline ‘r’ and ‘a’ for example, where he uses insular forms) but is evidently earlier, for a Latin gloss in the main

²⁵ I rely here on the transcription kindly lent by Dr Paolo Vaciago, of Università di Roma Tre.

²⁶ See Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 143-4; Parkes, ‘A Note’, 425-7. There is a particularly striking resemblance to the glossing in the manuscript Bern, Burgerbibliothek, C 219, dated to late in the ninth century and including glossing in Welsh or Cornish; this seems to have been originally part of a collection containing Augustine’s *Categoriae* and Boethius’s translation of Porphyrius (see W. M. Lindsay, *Early Welsh Script* (Oxford, 1912), 22-3).

²⁷ M. B. Parkes, ‘*Rædan, areccan, smeagan*: how the Anglo-Saxons read’, *ASE* 26 (1997), 1-22, at 10.

²⁸ I am extremely grateful to my colleague Nicolas Jacobs, of Jesus College Oxford, for identifying the word and indeed the language. Professor Patrick Sims-Williams of Aberystwyth University has also been very helpful in commenting on the gloss.

glossator's hand, 'odiosa', is squeezed between the lemma and the Welsh gloss. It seems likely though that the two Welsh commentators were at work at the same time and in the same place, for what looks like the same hand as that responsible for the single Welsh gloss appears again on f. 46v, though this time in Latin, and seems here to be writing after the main Welsh glossator.

Perhaps the first thing to be said about the glosses in the main glossator's hand, since this is not really evident from Troncarelli's transcription, is that there is an enormous amount of lexical glossing, commenting on fairly simple words by writing a virtual synonym above them or offering a short phrase to explain a fairly simple concept. In the opening sentence of Book 2 'opticit' is glossed 'conticit', 'ubi' is glossed 'postquam', 'attentionem meam' is glossed 'dolorem meum', 'modesta' is glossed 'tranquilla' and 'collegit' is glossed 'deprehendit'. 'Inquit' is repeatedly glossed 'dixit'. The vast majority of glosses are of this kind. (The Vatican manuscript is not unique in this respect.)

Beyond this simple lexical glossing there are also occasional comments, interlinear and marginal, explaining an idea. Thus the reference to Fortune as a 'prodigium' in 2 prose 1 generates a comment (f. 9r) which is hard to read but appears to be roughly as follows:

Prodigium dicitur uelut iudicium quod praedicit aliquid. monstrum autem ueluti monestrum quod moneat futura. Fortuna nempe et prodigium et monstrum est et aliud in praesenti aliud in futura demonstrat.

Troncarelli prints most of the marginal comments in this hand but only a few of the interlinear ones.

A fair proportion of the short interlinear glosses are also found in other manuscripts attributed to the Remigian tradition, including those of Continental provenance: of the five cited for the first sentence in Book 2 above, 'opticit' is not in any of those so far collated by us, but the other four all are. A certain amount of coincidental agreement is inevitable in the choice of lexical equivalents, but there is a sufficient amount of agreement with manuscripts of Continental origin to suggest that they and Vatican 3363 draw on an early (i.e. ninth century) stratum of glossing of this kind. Of the longer glosses in the Welsh hand in Books 1 and 2, none has so far appeared in Remigian manuscripts of Continental provenance. They sometimes show sufficient resemblance to suggest a common tradition of study or the use of similar sources, but seldom any verbal links of the kind that would suggest they were copied from an existing commentary. Nor do they seem to appear in the St Gall tradition, on the evidence currently available. They evidently represent an independent strand of commentary that had developed by the end of the ninth century. The fact that the lexical glosses are shared with other manuscripts but the longer comments mainly not suggests that they came to the text by different processes.²⁹ The Welsh glossator presumably had access to a manuscript with a lot of lexical glossing and short comments between the lines but no longer marginal commentary, and copied what he could find. Whether he supplied the rest from his own thoughts and reading or from some other manuscript of Boethius, perhaps insular, which has left no trace on the Continental commentary tradition is so far unclear.

3. 'Glastonbury' hands.

Interlinear glosses and marginal comments in a hybrid script, combining insular and caroline features, appear very thickly on the first few pages of the manuscript (2v-4r) and then very

²⁹ Cf. Parkes ('*Rædan*', 10), who refers to two sets of glosses.

occasionally thereafter. Troncarelli identified in some of these the hand of St Dunstan, as witnessed by comments and additions in the manuscript traditionally known as St Dunstan's Class-Book, and this has been supported by Malcolm Parkes, Julian Brown and Neil Ker, and accepted by later commentators.³⁰ The rest were attributed by Troncarelli to a second Glastonbury scribe, working like Dunstan towards the middle of the tenth century. The appearance of the comments written in a hybrid insular-caroline certainly varies (and there are a sprinkling of glosses in what look like several other hands, probably of the tenth century) but I have not been able myself to identify two distinct hands with any confidence, and refer to these glosses simply as the Glastonbury hands. Troncarelli again prints most of the marginal comments but only a few of the interlinear ones.

Troncarelli describes the two Glastonbury hands as revising, supplementing and correcting the work of the first (Welsh) hand.³¹ Some of the one-word interlinear glosses in the Welsh hand are indeed coupled with a second gloss in one of the Glastonbury hands in a manner which suggests that the latter were at work later, as the dates usually assigned to the hands would suggest³². A possible counter-indication is the fact that the Welsh hand does not seem to begin entering longer marginal glosses until the initial burst of marginal glossing by the Glastonbury hands on ff. 2v-4r has finished, as if he started his marginal glosses after them. But since there is very little marginal commentary in his hand on ff. 5 and 6 either it is not unlikely that he had left the margins of ff. 2v-3v and most of 4r blank; any glossing on the beginning of the text has of course disappeared with the loss of the first leaf.

Some of the scholia in these Glastonbury hands are paralleled in Continental manuscripts of the Remigian tradition. Thus on f. 3r of Vatican 3363 we find *Corus*, the north-east wind, glossed: 'Ventus est in sinistra parte Fauonii adducens pluuiam'. The same gloss, but with 'nubila' for 'pluuiam', appears in various forms in Remigian manuscripts. Four lines later we find *Boreas* (1 metre 3) glossed in the Dunstan hand 'ventus frigidissimus dissipans nubes', a comment which is also found in several others that supposedly represent Remigius (Troncarelli cited it from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 15090). Presumably Dunstan had (or had seen) another copy of the *Consolatio* with at least some elements of a Remigian-type commentary. His use of other manuscripts of Boethius is in any case indicated by the gloss to 1 metre 3.1 referring to the reading of other manuscripts: 'quidam

³⁰ Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 142 and n. 23, citing the support of Ker and Brown; Parkes, 'A Note', 425-7; M. Budny, "'St Dunstan's Classbook'" and its Frontispiece: Dunstan's Portrait and Autograph', in *St Dunstan, his Life, Times and Cult*, ed. N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge, 1992), 103-42, esp. 137-8. The hand was originally identified as St Dunstan's by R. W. Hunt in his *St Dunstan's Classbook from Glastonbury* (Amsterdam, 1961). On the possibility that the Dunstan glosses were not written at Glastonbury, see N. P. Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', in *St Dunstan, his Life, Times and Cult*, ed. N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 1-24, and Budny, 'St Dunstan's Classbook', 140.

³¹ Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 143.

³² Bischoff's notes suggest a tenth-century date for all the insular hands in the Vatican manuscript.

codices habent discussa nocte'.³³ But most of the Glastonbury comments are not so far found in other Remigian manuscripts except in CUL Kk.3.21 and sometimes Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 17814. The comment on the variant reading at 1 metre 3.1 is itself puzzling. The text here reads: 'tunc me discussa liquerunt nocte tenebrae'. If Dunstan's gloss means that some manuscripts have the reading 'discussa nocte', with nothing intervening, no such manuscript has yet been noted. If he was alluding to the fact that some manuscripts have 'discussa', agreeing with 'nocte', and others have 'discussae', agreeing with 'tenebrae', that is true, but since the text of Vatican 3363 itself has 'discussa' the comment is inappropriate; perhaps he simply copied the gloss from another manuscript which had a different reading, without thinking about its inappropriateness in this manuscript. The overall evidence suggests that he was using another manuscript at least some of the time, but apart from a few comments which also surface in the Remigian tradition, and which could easily themselves be pre-Remigian, it does not appear to have had much in common with the Remigian tradition as we know it.

The relation of the Vatican 3363 glosses to later English Manuscripts

In the course of a brief discussion of the Vatican manuscript in 1977 Diane Bolton pointed out that there was close agreement between those glosses from Vatican 3363 which had been reported by Troncarelli and those in CUL Kk.3.21 (which she called K).³⁴ This is an English manuscript of the eleventh century, perhaps originating from Abingdon, containing a much expanded version of the 'Remigian' commentary represented by Continental manuscripts, with glosses in several different hands. She offered two possible explanations for the parallels:

If the glosses [in the Vatican manuscript] are 9th-century in date, they could be a source for K and might even be Asser's commentary itself. The early dating, however, is not beyond dispute, and if most of the glosses belong to the 10th century they derive from the commentaries of Remigius and his revisers.³⁵

There is in fact a massive amount of agreement between the Vatican manuscript and CUL Kk.3.21, and the cumulative evidence makes it very probable that Bolton's 'K tradition' does indeed draw on Vatican 3363 itself, though possibly via an intermediary. The many parallels between the two manuscripts cover a range of different glosses which were entered in Vatican 3363 at different times and by different hands. Thus the gloss on 1 metre 7 on a ninth-century Continental hand in Vatican 3363³⁶ appears verbatim in CUL Kk.3.21, in addition to the longer but clearly related gloss which appears in other Remigian manuscripts. The same links are evident in the mass of glosses, interlinear and marginal, entered in the Welsh hand. Thus on f. 7r of Vatican 3363 we find glossing *hominum solos* in 1 metre 5:

Homines non tenentur ea lege qua conditi sunt, quia cum omnia teneant leges proprias homines suam ad inventionem efficiunt malum.

This is matched almost exactly by the gloss in CUL Kk.3.21 (f. 11r). But nothing like it

³³ Cf Parkes, 'A Note', 426.

³⁴ Bolton, 'The Study', 36; see also 50.

³⁵ See Bolton, 'The Study', 36 and n. 25.

³⁶ See above p. 5.

appears in the Maihingen manuscript identified by Stewart or in the ‘Remigian’ Paris manuscripts that we have so far consulted (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: nouv. acq. lat. 1478, lat. 15090, lat. 17814, lat. 6401A), or in other Vatican and Florence manuscripts that we have examined. Of the first thirty-three longer scholia in Book 2 in Vatican 3363, in the Welsh hand, some fourteen are otherwise found only in CUL Kk.3.21, and another four are found only in CUL Kk.3.21 and another English manuscript, Paris 17814. The others are so far unique to Vatican 3363. We see the same pattern with the glosses added in the Glastonbury hands of the first half of the tenth century. Note for instance the interesting gloss on 1 metre 2.22-3 ‘Rimari solitus atque latentis / Naturae varias reddere causas’ which appears both in the Vatican manuscript, in the Glastonbury hand, and in CUL Kk.3.21:

Rimari proprie porcorum est atque reddere solitus erat uarias causas quod est proprium philosophorum quia aliis sapientiam et aliis ea quae superius descripta sunt.

No other manuscript that we have yet examined has anything resembling this. In fact, of the first twenty-six longer comments in Glastonbury hands, ten are found otherwise only in CUL Kk.3.21, eleven are found just in CUL Kk.3.21 and Paris 17814, and just two are found in other Remigian manuscripts.

The glosses in CUL Kk.3.21 thus match several different layers of material which gradually came together in the Vatican manuscript: ninth-century glosses in a Continental hand; glosses of the end of the ninth century in the Welsh hand, otherwise unique to CUL Kk.3.21; and comments otherwise unique to CUL Kk.3.21 and entered by various hands in the tenth century. It is difficult to believe that the same assemblage of material was available independently in another manuscript, or could have come together coincidentally in both Vatican 3363 and CUL Kk.3.21. Given that the Vatican manuscript was in England in the tenth century, it is simplest to conclude that the compiler who produced the revised version of Remigius seen in CUL Kk.3.21 drew on Vatican (or a copy of it) as at least one source of additional comments. Bolton reported that the parallels did not occur after 3 metre 5. I have in fact found a few significant parallels later in Book 3, but none thereafter. This is partly at least because commentary in Vatican itself becomes much sparser. Fading energy is a recurrent phenomenon amongst glossators of the *Consolatio*.

As indicated above, another manuscript which shows some links with the Vatican glosses is Paris 17814, a manuscript of the later tenth century from Canterbury. Bolton identifies this as a version of the basic Remigian commentary but more than one hand is evident in the glosses and there seems to be more than one layer. In Book 2 I have noted five striking parallels between the Vatican manuscript and the Paris one, all but one witnessed by CUL Kk.3.21 as well but not by other Remigian manuscripts. In one case Paris 17814 preserves an error which is partly in Vatican 3363. All three manuscripts have basically the same gloss to 2 prose 2.13 ‘in Iouis limine’:

Duo ordines auium dicuntur resedissee quondam in limine Iouis. quorum un[i]us ordinis dicebantur oscine. alteri prepetes quorum alter prosperitatis. alter tristitiae erat praenuntius.

In Vatican and Paris however it occurs out of place on the previous page, attached in the former to the wrong lemma and in the latter to no lemma. Moreover, Vatican miscopies ‘in limine’ in the comment as ‘illumine’, while Paris gives it as ‘in lumine’. (CUL Kk.3.21 has it correctly, presumably because a scribe or user corrected the reading in the light of the lemma.) Similarly, in Book 1, as noted above, eleven of the first twenty-six scholia in the Glastonbury hands are found in CUL Kk.3.21 and Paris 17814 but not, on present evidence, in any other manuscripts.

It seems very likely, then, that Paris 17814 draws some of its glosses from the Vatican manuscript as well. It has far fewer of them than CUL Kk.3.21 but in at least one case has a Vatican gloss (in the Dunstan hand) that does not appear in CUL Kk.3.21: ‘Vesevus mons Apuliae mittens ex calore solis et vi ventorum vaporem ignis flammiferi’. There are two possible explanations for its smaller selection than CUL Kk.3.21: it may have drawn independently on Vatican 3363; or both CUL Kk.3.21 and Paris 17814 may have drawn on the same compilation, based on Remigius, Vatican and perhaps other sources, but Paris may have been more selective.

A third English manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6401A, may also show the influence of the Vatican glosses. On the end of 1 metre 7 it has the early gloss cited above, which otherwise occurs only in CUL Kk.3.21.

The influence of the commentary on the Old English Boethius

Despite the extensive interest in the *Consolatio* on the Continent through the ninth century, there is still no evidence of its presence in England before King Alfred’s adaptation in the last decade of the century. Given William of Malmesbury’s claim that Asser had explained Boethius to King Alfred in simpler terms, to help with the translation, and the coincidence of a commentary in a Welsh hand from just the right date, it is inevitable that the Vatican manuscript would be associated with Asser’s role. Courcelle raised the question but dismissed it on the grounds that the views indicated in the comments on 3 metre 9 were too unorthodox to be attributed to Asser.³⁷ Troncarelli proposed a connection too, but realising how limited were the Vatican glosses in comparison with the Old English version, argued that they represented an abridgement of the commentary prepared by Asser for Alfred, or else a sort of aide-memoire which Alfred supplemented by consulting Asser’s longer version or the sources Asser had used to compile it.³⁸ Troncarelli offered two specific parallels to confirm his argument, both in the much-discussed 3 metre 12 on Orpheus, but as Wittig has pointed out, the confusion of the Fates and the Furies in the Old English text is too common in commentary on Boethius to be attributed specifically to Vatican 3363, and Wittig’s dismissal of the Vatican gloss as a source for the Old English representation of Charon as three-headed is persuasive.³⁹ Moreover, in those places where the influence of Latin commentary on the Old English version does seem to me likely, the Vatican manuscript does not have the relevant gloss. Thus in 3 metre 6, the Old English rendering does seem to be strikingly parallel to the comment found in Remigian commentary. There is nothing in the Old English rendering of this that one could not imagine Alfred producing out of his own head, but there are aspects of the phrasing which seem strikingly like that of the Remigian commentary, marked in bold below:

Gloss: Ad maiorem uero conciliationem humani generis **unum tantum hominem creauit de quo mulierem produxit. de quibus omnes sumus nati equaliter . omnes igitur nobiles**

³⁷ Courcelle, *La Consolation*, 269-70.

³⁸ Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 146-51.

³⁹ Joseph Wittig, ‘King Alfred’s Boethius and its Latin Sources: a Reconsideration’, *ASE* 11 (1983), 157-98, at 170, 172. Cf too Bolton, ‘The Study’, 38.

similiter.⁴⁰

OE Boethius, c. XXX:

Hwæt, ealle men hæfdon gelicne fruman, **forþam hi ealle coman of anum fæder and of anre meder, and ealle hi beoð git gelice acennede** . Nis þæt nan wundor, forþamþe an God is fæder eallra gesceafta, forþam he hi ealle gesceop and ealra welt . Se selð þære sunnan leoht, and þam monan, and ealle tungl a geset. He gesceop men on eorþan; gegaderode þa saula and þone lichoman mid his þam anwealde, and ealle menn gesceop emnæpele on þære fruman gecynde. Hwi ofermodige ge þonne ofer oðre men for eowrum gebyrdum buton anweorce, nu ge nanne ne magon metan unæpelne? **ac ealle sint emnæpele**, gif ge willað þone fruman sceaft gepencan, and þone scippend, and siððan eoweres ælces acennednesse. Ac þa ryht-æpelo bið on þam mode, næs on þam flæsce, swa swa we ær sædon. Ac ælc mon þe allunga underpeoded bið unþeawum forlæt his sceppend and his fruman sceaft and his ædelo, and þonan wyrð anæpelad oð ðæt he wyrð unæpele.⁴¹

But there is nothing like this in the Vatican 3363 glosses. It may be, as Troncarelli suggested, that the Vatican glosses are only an abridgement of a fuller commentary which Asser prepared for Alfred, but so far there seems no positive evidence. The loss of the beginning of the original manuscript is unfortunate, since we cannot now tell whether it included a *Vita* of Boethius which might have influenced the Old English account of Boethius.

The manuscript nevertheless remains important in suggesting a context for the Old English adaptation. The history of the Vatican manuscript tells us that a Continental copy of the *Consolatio* with some commentary came into the hands of Welsh readers towards the end of the ninth century, and that one of them added a great deal of further annotation, in part by comparing it with other copies. We do not know whether it reached England then or earlier, but it was certainly being used in England at least a generation or two after the time of Alfred. Since both the commentator from the end of the ninth century and those from the first half of the tenth century were actively comparing it with other copies, it is not far-fetched to suppose that another copy with a different kind of commentary was available to the Alfredian circle as well. On the evidence available so far, none of these insular readers were relying primarily on the Remigian commentary as we know it. The relationship seems in fact to have been in the other direction. When Remigian commentary came into use in England, it was enriched and expanded by compilers who drew heavily on the Vatican manuscript as a source of another layer of glossing. They presumably recognised it as a reflex of a distinct tradition. But the evidence of the earliest strand of glosses in the manuscript suggests that some of the glosses that became associated with the Continental Remigian tradition later were already in circulation in the ninth century, and more could therefore have been available to King Alfred.

Perhaps the key question in this interesting career is where the Welsh commentator

⁴⁰ This is taken from CUL Kk 3.21 (f. 44v), but it also appears in the Maihingen manuscript and Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 1581.

⁴¹ *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius 'De Consolatione Philosophiae'*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford 1899), 69, lines 17-32.

was at work and how his copy of Boethius came to Glastonbury. Does he reflect a Welsh tradition of scholarship, or did he acquire the manuscript and the commentary on the Continent, or was he at work in England using materials available there? Troncarelli suggested that he was writing at Glastonbury, Bolton in Wales or Cornwall, Beaumont at possibly Alfred's court;⁴² Parkes suggested the British Isles⁴³ but has since emphasised to me the possibility that he may have been at work on the Continent. If he was indeed working in England the fact that he had access to other copies of the *Consolatio* from which he took at least some of his glosses becomes very significant, and we could hardly avoid connecting such activity with the work of Alfred and his court at the same time. But in the absence of clear evidence of a connection with Asser and King Alfred, there is no reason to think the manuscript had been elsewhere in England before it came to Glastonbury, or that the glosses drew on an English exemplar, and there is so far no good evidence that the Welsh commentator (or commentators) was working in England.⁴⁴ The discovery of a second Welsh hand in the manuscript, responsible for the Welsh gloss on f. 37r, strongly suggests that the manuscript was in Wales in the ninth century, and not just in the hands of a single peripatetic Welsh scholar on the Continent or in England. We should perhaps recall that the famous compilation known as St Dunstan's Classbook, which also preserves much annotation by Dunstan, includes two Welsh books of the ninth century, the *Liber Commonei* and Book I of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, as well as one of Breton provenance,⁴⁵ and that the Bern fragment containing glosses to Augustine (a few in Welsh) in a similar script from the same period probably came from a manuscript containing another work by Boethius.⁴⁶ It would be simplest to assume that the Vatican manuscript reached Dunstan by the same route as the booklets in the 'Classbook', and probably therefore came from Wales, but whether this was due to the collecting activities and interests of Dunstan himself or whether they all came to Glastonbury from Celtic regions well before Dunstan's time cannot yet be determined.⁴⁷ Tempting though it is to think that the manuscript was brought to Alfred's court by one of his learned foreign advisers, it is more than the evidence will allow. But the fact that the *Consolatio* was known to Welsh scholars in the late ninth century, and was studied in Wales itself, makes it seem very likely that Asser knew of it and that it was Asser who drew Alfred's attention to the work.

⁴² Troncarelli, *Tradizioni*, 144; Bolton, 'The study', 36; J. Beaumont, 'The Latin Tradition of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*', in *Boethius: his Life, Times and Influence*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford, 1981), 278-305, at 281.

⁴³ Parkes, 'A Note', 425.

⁴⁴ Troncarelli suggested Glastonbury on the grounds that the Welsh commentator showed the influence of Continental culture.

⁴⁵ See Hunt, *St Dunstan's Classbook*, and Budny, 'St Dunstan's Classbook'.

⁴⁶ See above p. 7 n.26.

⁴⁷ The early history of Glastonbury remains obscure, but there is some reason to doubt that it was a busy scholarly centre before Dunstan's time; see L. Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996).

Conclusion

To sum up this complicated story, the manuscript originated in France, in the Loire region, in the first half of the ninth century, soon after the rediscovery of the work by Carolingian scholars, and acquired some sporadic glossing on the Continent later in the century. The glossing seems to have drawn on an existing body of commentary which resembles in part that found later in the Remigian and St Gall tradition. By the end of the ninth century the manuscript had arrived in Wales and fell into the hands of a Welsh reader who added a very extensive range of glosses, extending right through the text. For the numerous, almost obsessive, assemblage of short mainly lexical glosses he seems to have drawn on an existing body of glossing which also surfaces in the Continental Remigian tradition later. For the longer scholia, which are much fewer, he either drew on his own reading and knowledge or copied from some tradition of Boethian commentary which has not otherwise survived. A few decades later the manuscript came into the hands of Dunstan, probably at Glastonbury, where he began annotating heavily but apparently lost interest in the process after the first few leaves and added only sporadic comments thereafter. He too was using other manuscripts of Boethius containing some commentary, a little of which seems to have matched what has become known as Remigian commentary. Either at Glastonbury or elsewhere in England, and some time in the later tenth century or the early eleventh, the manuscript then came into the hands of commentators who drew heavily on it to supplement the already extensive commentary material which they had inherited from the Continental 'Remigian' tradition.